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UPON THE COVER
OF THE
GRANITE SARCOPHAGUS OF RAMESES III.
IN THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM.

BY S. BIRCH, LL.D.
KEEPER OF ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

Cambridge.
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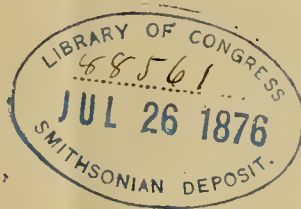
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Cambridge :
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AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

ON THE COVER OF THE GRANITE SARCOPHAGUS OF RAMESES III. IN THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM¹.










ONE of the most valuable Egyptian monuments in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge is the cover of the granite sarcophagus of Rameses III., the celebrated monarch of the 20th dynasty. It was presented to the University of Cambridge by the traveller and excavator Belzoni in 1823. That traveller removed it from the tomb of the king in the Biban-el-Moluk, or Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, at Thebes. The lid of the sarcophagus is of red granite, and measures about ten feet long by eight feet wide. Rameses is represented on the upper part of the lid in very salient relief, under the attributes of the god Sekar, or Socharis, one of the solar types of the god Ra, often conjoined with Ptah or Hephaistos, and Osiris, especially as the judge of Kar-neter or Hades. Rameses stands full face, his long hair, or head-dress, *namms*, ornamented at the ends and having an uræus serpent, the Egyptian emblem of royalty, on the forehead. On the top of his head is a symbolic head-dress consisting of the sun's disk, *aten*, placed between two ostrich feathers, emblems of truth, and referring to the "hall of the two truths" in Hades, over which Sekar, or Socharis, in his character of judge of the dead, presided, that being the name of the Hall of the Great Judgment of the Dead. They are placed upon two cows' horns, the meaning of which is as yet unexplained in this attire. There is a peculiarity about this representation not observed elsewhere, the feathers and horns are sculptured five deep. The body of the king is represented as mummied, or wrapped in bandages like Osiris and the mummies, his hands free and crossed; the right holds the crook, *hek*, emblem of ruling; and the left the three-thonged whip, *nexex*, symbolic of dominion; and both the special attributes of Osiris, who is represented with them and in this attitude. At the left side of the king is the head of the goddess Isis, wearing a throne, or seat, her name and emblem. The

¹ Read before the Cambridge Antiquarian Society November 8th, 1875.

rest of her figure is wanting, but she has been draped in a long garment, placing her right hand at the back of the head of the Osiris¹ king, and her left hand on his body to support his mummy upright. On the other side is the goddess Nephthys, the sister of Osiris, wearing a long head-dress, *namms*, tied with a crown, or fillet, *meh*, and having on her head an emblem composed of a hemispherical basket, used for the word 'Neb, 'lord,' or 'lady,' surmounting the square or rectangle, the hieroglyph of the word *a*, 'abode,' the two reading with the feminine article Nebta, the Egyptian name of Nephthys. This goddess wears a long garment and stands in the same attitude as her sister Isis, her left-hand placed behind the king and her right supporting him on his body. Under her feet is the Egyptian emblem *nub*, or 'gold,' represented as a kind of collar, and one often seen under the feet of Isis and Nephthys in these scenes on sarcophagi. Between each goddess and the king is a peculiarly elongated figure, wearing long hair and elevating the hands at the back of the king. Before this figure is a snake, not the uræus. A similar snake, painted black, is represented round the body of Rameses IX. in the Biban-el-Moluk². The elongated figure also occurs in some of the scenes of the sarcophagi³, but the one that generally receives the figure of Osiris is one of the types of Athor, the Egyptian Venus, especially that in which she appears as goddess of the West. Round the side of the lid are parts of two horizontal lines of hieroglyphs meeting at the top under the head and passing to the feet, at which were two jackals seated on pylons, the Ap-heriu, or 'openers of the Sun's path,' of the Karneter or Hades; that passing on the right side of the lid is most complete. It reads

				
<i>Hesar</i>	<i>suten</i>	<i>Xeb</i>	<i>neb</i>	<i>tata</i>






The Osiris, king of the upper and lower country, lord of the two countries.








								
<i>RA</i>	<i>user</i>	<i>Ma</i>	<i>Amen</i>	<i>meri</i>		<i>sa</i>	<i>Ra</i>	
RA-USER-MA			AMEN MERI,		son [of] the Sun.			







¹ All deceased were considered to be Osiris, or Osirian, after their decease, and so named from the 19th dynasty.



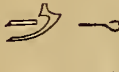



² Champollion, *Notices descriptives*, p. 170.







³ Sharpe, *Egypt. Inscr.* Pl. 41.

 *meri*
  *neteru*
  *neb*
  *sau*
  *Ramessu*
 Beloved of the gods, lord of diadems, RAMESSU.





 *hek*
  *An*
  *ma*
  *xru*
  *au-k*
  *em*
  *neter*
 Ruler of On, the truth spoken¹. Thou art a god.








 *unn-k*
  *em*
  *user*
  *nen*
  *xetf*
  *nak*
 Thou art provided, not are the opposers to thee.

 *ta en*
  *nak*
  *ma xru*
  *am*
  *sen*
  *unn*
 Thou hast been given justification from them, they

 *sen*
  *em*
  *Hesar*
 ...
  *meses*
  *Hek*
  *An*
 are as Osiris [RA]MESES, ruler of On.

The line to the left of the sarcophagus has only the beginning remaining. It reads

 *Tetu*
  *Hesar*
  *suten*
  *Ra user Ma Amen meri*
 The words Osirian king RA USER MA AMEN MERI

 *pu*
  *ma-xru*
  *au*
  *k*
  *em*
  *sa*
  *a*
 is truth spoken. Thou art as my son...

These inscriptions are portions of an early formula found on the coffin of Menkara, or Mycerinus, of the fourth dynasty, and continued till this and even a later period. In that older monument the name of the goddess Nut appears, and she is said to stretch her wings over the

¹ Or justified, *i.e.* acquitted, or found truthful, at the final judgment—his word true against his enemies or detractors.

Osiris, or deceased monarch, figured and embalmed on the model of Osiris. Mythically the body of Osiris was supposed to be canopied by the Heaven, and received in the arms of the West, all the principal sepulchres being situated on the left bank of the river Nile. The inside of the lid is occupied by a figure of the goddess Isis standing draped, facing to the right, in the usual female garment and wearing the throne; her name and emblem on the symbol gold. The goddess *Nut*, or the Ether, usually appears in this place, and Isis evidently was considered one of the forms of that goddess. Above is a figure of the heaven.

The lower part, or chest, of the sarcophagus¹ is in the Museum of the Louvre, and has the unusual shape of a cartouche. The scenes with which it is sculptured refer to the passage of the sun through the lower hemisphere or heaven, and Isis and Nephthys are at the head and feet, on the emblems of gold, in the act of kneeling. They here represent the lamentation of the dead Osiris by these goddesses over him at his bier.

The tomb of Rameses III. is one of the most magnificent in the valley of the tombs of the kings, and the representations are of considerable interest². Its entrance is open to the sky, and at the end of the passage the ceiling is supported by four pillars with capitals formed by the heads of bulls, the horns curved inwards, as in the head-dress of the king. The scenes in it represent Isis and Nephthys kneeling before the god Chnoumis and the Scarabæus. On the right wall of the first corridor is the goddess of truth, *Ma*, winged, kneeling, on the emblem 'lord,' or 'dominion,' facing the entrance, repeated again on the left wall. These goddesses, respectively the lotus and papyrus emblems, have the 'upper' and the 'lower' country. On the right wall of the first corridor is the figure of Rameses III. adoring the solar disk and the sun disk on a hill, between a crocodile and a serpent, both referring to the sun's path. The other scenes chiefly relate to the usual passage of the sun in the lower heaven during the night, and through the regions of the Karneter, or Hades. The tomb is particularly distinguished by eight small halls pierced laterally in the walls of the first and second corridor. In these are representations not of a mythical nature but of objects of civil and political life, as the

¹ De Rougé, *Monuments Égyptiens dans le Musée du Louvre*. 8vo. Paris, 1855.

² Champollion, *Notices descriptives*. Fol. Paris, 1844, p. 407 and foll. Champollion, Figeac, *L'Égypte*, p. 347.

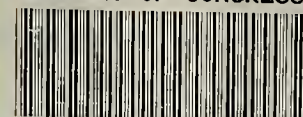
work of the kitchen, the rich and sumptuous furniture of the palace, the weapons and military standards of the army, the war galleys and transports of the fleet, and twelve representations of the Nile, or *Hapi*, and Egypt. It is the fifth tomb in the valley, and a papyrus with the plan and description is said to have been found by Champollion in the Museum of Turin¹. It had clearly been accessible and apparently rifled at an early period, for the hieratic inscriptions on its walls record the names of different scribes who had visited it in Pharaonic times, as Greek inscriptions do the Greek and Roman travellers who penetrated during the period of the Roman empire. The mummy of Rameses had been destroyed and his tomb in recent times rifled of its contents; sepulchral figures of the king there once deposited being found in the Museums of Europe.

The fracture of the lid of the coffin is also probably of ancient date, and even in the flourishing times of the monarchy thieves and robbers opened the royal sarcophagi, tore away the gold and other valuable ornaments, and burnt the wooden coffins deposited inside the massive stone sarcophagi.

Rameses III.² was one of the most remarkable monarchs in the annals of Egypt. A period of political confusion and foreign conquest of the country preceded his advent to the crown. His father, Setnecht, had indeed succeeded in driving out the foreign invaders and re-establishing the native dynasty of the Theban kings, the 20th of the lists of Manetho. But Rameses had a great task before him, called to the throne at a youthful age. Already in her decline Egypt had recourse to foreign mercenaries, the *Sharutana*, or Sardinians, under which name are probably comprised the various nationalities of the Greek isles, and the *Kahaka* and *Masuaša*, Libyan tribes on the West, and the *Shasu* and Asiatics on the East. The first task of Rameses was to restore the civil government and military discipline, while the disposition and organization of foreigners established in Egypt had become one of the most important questions. In his fifth year he defeated the Maxyes and Libyans with great slaughter when they had invaded Egypt led by five chiefs, and in the same year he had also to repulse the Satu, or eastern foreigners, who had attacked Egypt. The maritime nations of the West, it appears, had

¹ Champollion, Figeac, *L'Égypte*, p. 348. It appears however to be a plan of the grave of his successor, Rameses IV. Lepsius, R., *Grundplan des Grabes des Königs Rameses IV.* 4^{te}. Berl. 1867.

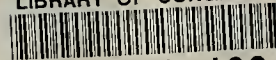
² For the principal events of the life of Rameses III. see Chabas, F., *Recherches pour servir à l'histoire de XIX. dynastie*, 1873, and Eisenlohr, *Der grosse Harris papyrus.* Leipzig, 1872.



invaded Palestine and the Syrian coast in his eighth year, and, after taking Carchemish, a confederation of the *Pulusatu*, supposed by some to be the Pelasgi, *Tekkaru* or Teucri, *Šakaluša* or Siculi, *Tanau* or Daunians, if not Danai, and *Ušaša* or Osci, marched to the conquest of Egypt. It is possible that they reached the mouth of the eastern branch of the Nile. But Rameses concentrated an army at Taha in Northern Palestine, and marched back to defend the Nile. Assisted by his mercenary forces, he inflicted a severe defeat on the confederated West, and returned with his prisoners to Thebes. In his eleventh year the Mashuasha, or Maxyes, assisted by the Tahennu, or Libyans, again invaded Egypt to suffer a fresh defeat, and the country seems from this period to have remained in a state of tranquillity. The other events of his reign were of a more pacific nature. In an eastern site called Ainau, supposed to be half-way between Hebron and Rehoboth, he had made a great tank, or reservoir, surrounded by a lofty wall. He had despatched a fleet to Arabia, which had returned laden with the spices and gums of that country to Coptos, and which were thence transported by men and on the backs of asses to Thebes. From Ataka, the supposed scriptural Athak, he had received ingots of copper or brass the colour of gold, and he continued to work the turquoise mines at the Sarbit el Khadim in Mount Sinai. Some small wars carried on in Ethiopia against the black races alone disturbed the peace that Egypt otherwise enjoyed. To the three principal Egyptian cities he had made enormous gifts during the years of his reign, and the temples of Tum at Heliopolis, Ptah at Memphis, and Ammon at Thebes, were restored, embellished, maintained, and supplied with all things necessary. The vast temple at Medinat Habu, his palace and his treasury, still remain to attest his magnificence and grandeur, and, if his domestic life was that of an ordinary Egyptian monarch, he was as distinguished in the battle-field as the palace. Treason no doubt disturbed his latter days, and it is not known how he died, but he expired after a reign of 31 years and some months, and left the throne to his son, it is supposed about B.C. 1200. It is of this heroic monarch that the University of Cambridge possesses the lid of the sarcophagus, a monument of great value and antiquity, and one deserving every care for its due preservation¹.

¹ The lid is figured by Yorke and Leake in their account of the principal Egyptian monuments in England, *Memoirs of the Roy. Soc. of Literature*, Vol. I. 4to. London, 1827; and in a privately printed dissertation, *Egyptian Antiquities*, by J. P. Cory, M.A. there is an account of the coffin and inscription.

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